

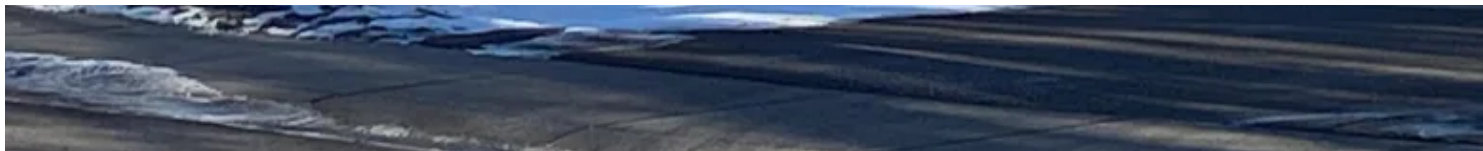
Saskatoon

## Fire Department called in, 2 more residents dead in outbreak at Regina's Extendicare home

Altogether, 11 residents of the home who had COVID-19 have died

[Guy Quenneville](#) · CBC News · Posted: Dec 08, 2020 2:46 PM CT | Last Updated: December 9, 2020





Members of the Saskatchewan Patient Transfer Service can be seen outside of Extendicare Parkside in Regina on Sunday. (Cory Herperger/CBC )

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Two more residents have died and the Regina Fire Department has been called in to help with the COVID-19 outbreak at the Parkside Extendicare home in Regina, the worst known outbreak in a Saskatchewan long-term care facility.

"We were quick to provide several four-member teams to assist," Deputy Chief Neil Sundeen said in an emailed statement on Tuesday. "These members started working 12-hour shifts on Sunday, performing all kinds of duties from personal care to COVID-19 swab testing. This work will continue until Wednesday."

News of the fire department's assistance comes the same day Extendicare reported another two infected Parkside residents have died, bringing the total number of COVID-19-related deaths at the facility to 11.

There are now 178 known active cases of COVID-19 at the home: 123 among residents and another 55 with staff, said Extendicare spokesperson Laura Gallant.

The fire department was brought in "in light of current staffing challenges," she said.

Sundeen said the fire department was asked to help last Friday by the Saskatchewan Health Authority, which inspects and monitors Parkside. He said the fire department has more than 100 firefighters qualified to work as paramedics, plus another 146 medical first responders.

The plan is not without risk, Sundeen said.

"We are confident that with the PPE, training and experience of our teams, that this risk is well managed," he said.

## Health minister 'very concerned' about outbreak

Saskatchewan Health Minister Paul Merriman said Monday that he's "very concerned" about the outbreak at Parkside.

"Unfortunately, with this one, it got in very quickly and spread very quickly," Merriman told reporters.

Brian Albert's 98-year-old mother Marie is a Parkside resident who tested positive for the virus. She's on oxygen and antibiotics and remains at the home inside a single room, Albert said.

"My mom can't go anywhere. My mom's gotta ride this out," said Albert said.

He went to visit his mother Tuesday afternoon, as he does several times a day.

"She looks better today," Albert said as he peered at Marie on the other side of her window at the Rae Street facility. "It's so up and down."

At least 25 COVID-free Parkside residents have been moved to Pioneer Village, a different care home.

Marie Albert's son Brian took this picture of her through her window Tuesday during his latest visit to her at the Parkside Extendicare home in Regina. (Brian Albert)

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## 'They're stretched to the limit'

Albert said Extendicare doesn't have "near enough" staff to handle the outbreak. He cited a phone call he made to the home a few days ago.

"I can hear it in their voice that they're tired," Albert said. "I was talking to a nurse and, right in the middle, he had to hang up and go and leave to go somewhere. He phoned me back again. I said, 'What was that about? My mom?' He goes, 'No, somebody else.'"

"They're stretched to the limit."

Service Employees International Union (SEIU) West, which represents health care workers at the home, has also voiced worries about staffing levels at Parkside.

- [Union says Sask.'s largest long-term care outbreak could have been lessened with more gov't action](#)

On Monday, Merriman said the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) has moved workers from other parts of the health system to Parkside, echoing [a plan first touted last week](#) by the health authority.

"Not just [at Parkside] but other ones across the board," Merriman said. "We're doing spot audits to make sure that everybody is complying with the public health orders."

At Parkside in particular, "we want to make sure that we've got the proper amount of people in there because there are so many staff members that are down," Merriman said.

Saskatchewan Health Minister Paul Merriman addresses reporters at the legislative assembly building on Monday. (CBC)

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Parkside has 228 beds overall, according to SHA's latest posted inspection from 2019.

"All available resources have been deployed to remove this virus from Parkside as quickly as possible," Gallant said in a statement Monday.

## **Gov't prodded pre-COVID to fund upgrades**

After health officials publicly reported the COVID-19 outbreak at Parkside on Nov. 20 — but before any resident deaths at the home had been reported — Extendicare called on the province to support mandatory testing of long-term care staff on a weekly basis to identify any new cases as early as possible in order to prevent further spread.

"There is no time to waste. We must act now," Extendicare's chief medical Matthew Mogan said in a statement.

On Monday, Gallant said progress was made on that front.

"We're heartened that Saskatchewan Health has indicated they will support this and stand ready to implement the program in our homes," Gallant said.

COVID-positive resident Marie Albert (pictured through a window) sits in her single room at Parkside Extendicare in Regina on Tuesday. (Brian Albert)

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That's not the only concern Extendicare has recently raised with the province, which provides Parkside with operating funding.

"The facility is old and in need of replacement due to pending infrastructure and large system (HVAC) failures," according to the 2019 inspection report. "The current design with a large number of four-bed rooms does not meet current standards of care or resident and family expectations for a home environment."

Gallant said Extendicare has been in ongoing discussions with the provincial government for several years about getting financial help to redevelop the home, Gallant said.

"While we have not yet received any approvals to our proposals to build new homes to replace these older facilities, we remain committed to doing so and recently reignited these discussions earlier this year ahead of the second wave," Gallant said.

"We would require their support to build a new long-term care home and operate the licensed beds within it, in alignment with SHA requirements."

- [Sask.'s new COVID-19 surge plan forecasts up to 560 new cases a day by mid-December](#)
- [Inside a Saskatchewan care home's COVID-19 outbreak — and one family's decision to pull their mom out](#)

Marie Albert was in a room with four other residents before being moved to a single room following her positive test, her son Brian said.

He had no concerns with his mother's care, and said he owes a lot to Extendicare.

"She did come home for a while and I tried to take care of her and she had to leave," he said.  
"Where would my mom be without Extendicare?"

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*With files from Morgan Modjeski*

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